

18.103 COMMUNICATION WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING AND USE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS

Reference:

Procedure 18.104 – Civilian Volunteers

Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

CPD Policy Statement Regarding Effective Communication with People Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Cincinnati Police Department Training Bulletin - #2006-03

Purpose:

To provide officers with the resources for effectively communicating with citizens who are deaf or hard of hearing, or who have speech impairments.

Policy:

Officers encountering any individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing will take all appropriate steps to ensure they communicate effectively with these individuals. The input of people who are deaf or hard of hearing is just as important to the law enforcement process as the input of others. Officers will not draw conclusions about incidents unless they fully understand, and are understood by, all those involved.

In situations when a non-disabled person would have access to a telephone, officers must provide a person who is deaf or hard of hearing the opportunity to place calls using a text telephone (TTY), telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD), or a phone with volume control if that will be effective for the caller. Officers must also accept telephone calls placed by a person who is deaf or hard of hearing through the Telecommunications Relay Service. The Telecommunications Relay Service is an operator based service that a hearing impaired person may use to contact a person or business not equipped with TTY/TDD technology.

Officers will give primary consideration to the type of communication aid requested by the person who is deaf or hard of hearing unless there is an equally effective means of communication available.

Information:

Police Communications Section (PCS) has installed Superprint 4425 Teletypewriters (TTYs or TDDs) in each of the five police districts, Criminal Investigation Section, and the PCS back-up site located at the Spinney Complex. Department personnel have been trained on the proper use of these

machines to communicate with the hearing impaired. PCS is responsible for the annual inventory and inspection of the equipment. PCS will provide ongoing and additional training on the use of the machines when requested. Calls from the hearing impaired may come directly to the TTY/TDD line number, or to the district/CIS desk line number.

There are several ways of communicating effectively with people who are deaf or hard of hearing. In some instances, a qualified sign language or oral interpreter is required to assist with communication. In other circumstances, use of gestures or visual aids to supplement speech, an exchange of written notes, use of computer or typewriter, or the use of assistive listening devices (to amplify sound for people who are hard of hearing) will be effective. The type of aid that will be required for effective communication will depend on the individual's usual method of communication, and the nature, importance, and duration of the communication at issue.

The Department utilizes the services of the Cincinnati Speech and Hearing Center for qualified sign language and oral interpreter services for people who are deaf or hard of hearing. When there is a request for a sign language or oral interpreter, officers and other personnel must contact a PCS supervisor, who is responsible for contacting the center to request interpreter services to assist the officer in the field. Sign language and oral interpreters will be made available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

"Oral interpreters" are not foreign language interpreters; they usually facilitate communication with people who were deafened later in life and do not use sign language.

The "Latino Beeper" is a project involving Spanish speaking volunteers, trained by the Department, who assist officers in basic translation. The volunteers are trained to gather facts at an officer's initial response to a call for service. The "Latino Beeper" will be used only for victims and witnesses, not suspects.

Procedure:

- A. Recognizing and Accepting Calls from a TTY/TDD Machine
 1. When a hearing impaired person using a TTY/TDD dials a district or the CIS desk line number, the call may be recognized by:
 - a. A warbling or chirping sound when the caller presses the space bar.
 - b. The caller ID indicating the caller is deaf.

- c. A voice activated TTY/TDD announcer indicating the caller is using a TTY or TDD machine.
 - d. Silence – any silent call should be treated as a potential TTY/TDD call.
 - 2. When the call is a TTY or TDD call, the recipient must transfer the call to the TTY/TDD machine in the following manner:
 - a. Transfer the call from the desk line number to the TTY/TDD line number using the same process as any call being transferred.
 - b. Keep background noise to a minimum. The TTY/TDD machine may interpret background noise as communication and distort the message.
 - c. Turn on the TTY/TDD machine.
 - d. Hit the control key and the number “4”. This sends a greeting specific to the receiving location.
 - e. Handle the call using the TTY/TDD keyboard.
 - f. Obtain the caller’s location, TTY/TDD callback number, and name. If the call is an emergency, do not attempt to transfer the call to PCS. Relay the information via the radio or call the PCS supervisor at line 263-8119 for further instructions.
 - g. Once the call is complete, turn off the TTY/TDD machine.
 - 3. When a hearing impaired person using a TTY/TDD dials the direct TTY/TDD line number, the “ring” light on the machine will flash to indicate an incoming call. Turn the TTY/TDD machine on and follow the same procedure as outlined above.
- B. Sign Language and Oral Interpreters for People who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.
- 1. If an officer has reason to believe that an individual with whom he is attempting to communicate has a hearing impairment, the officer will:
 - a. Determine whether the individual has a hearing impairment.
 - b. Notify the individual through the use of auxiliary aids (pen and paper) that a qualified sign language or oral interpreter will be provided at no charge, if desired.

- 1) If the individual requests a qualified sign language interpreter, determine whether the individual uses American Sign Language (ASL) or Signed English (SE) to communicate and relay the information to PCS.
 - 2) Face the deaf or hard of hearing individual and do not turn away while speaking. The officer should not cover his or her mouth while talking to the individual. Only one person should speak at a time and it may be necessary to speak more slowly.
- c. An officer will remove handcuffs from a non-violent arrestee who is deaf or hearing impaired, or will secure the arrestee in such a manner which permits communication, as safely as possible, after arrival at a secure facility. Officer safety and the safety of citizens must take precedence.
- 1) The immediate priority in any emergency is for the officer to stabilize the situation. If the deaf person is in immediate danger, exhibiting violent behavior, or if the officer has probable cause to make an arrest, the officer can request an interpreter respond to the location to which the subject is being transported.
 - 2) Officers should refrain from using family members or friends of the deaf individual, unless it is urgent to communicate immediately and that is the only option. However, if the deaf person requests that arrangement, the other person agrees, and the circumstances suggest that the relationship is not coercive or otherwise inappropriate, the officer may proceed.

C. Foreign Language Interpreters

1. When an officer comes in contact with an individual in need of a foreign language interpreter, notify PCS of the location and the need for an interpreter. PCS maintains a list of foreign language interpreters.
 - a. PCS will attempt to locate an on-duty officer fluent in the necessary language before contacting a person not employed by the Department.
2. When an officer is unable to communicate with a Spanish speaking victim or witness, the officer will request PCS to activate the "Latino Beeper".